



Akron City

May-August 2006

Swingin' Into Summer

*Aeros Baseball, LeBron's Bikeathon,
July 4 History Adventure*

City's New Trash Pickup System—See Discount Postcard Inside!

75th Anniversary of City's Landmark Buildings

From the Mayor...

As First Night 2006 was coming to a close, I was making preparations to travel to Israel with 21 local people from industry, healthcare, and The University of Akron. During our three-day visit, the delegation from Akron conducted more than 100 meetings with our business and research counterparts in Israel.

In Israel, the federal government provides seed money of almost \$400,000 over a two-year period to innovators who have a new product or process that might be developed into something marketable.

Israel has many brilliant scientists (Did you know that our basic cellular phone technology was developed there?). But as a nation of six million people, Israel is not a large enough market to make its innovators successful, so they come to the U.S. to build their companies. It seemed to me that if these Israeli innovations are coming to the United States, with its 300 million people, why shouldn't they come to Akron?

The result of the trip was that GOJO Industries chairman and CEO Joe Kanfer and I signed an agreement for Akron to invest about \$1.5 million in an Israel technology incubator called Targetech. The investment is

being made by a group called Greater Akron Investment Partners, which includes the City and local businesses.

This deal gives Akron ownership rights in Targetech and the companies it sponsors. Through our investment, Targetech will get an edge over other incubators in industries where Akron is


strong, such as polymers, advanced materials and biomedical.

In turn, the companies emerging from the incubator must use Akron as their home in the U.S. The City benefits by getting jobs, taxes, and something completely new—the possibility of dividends from part-ownership in the budding companies.

We are the first community in the U.S. that has put together such a public-private partnership. Akron knows how to work with innovators. Our Industrial Incubator has been operating for 23 years. More than 60 businesses that have graduated from the incubator are responsible for some 700 jobs in Akron and the region.

Actually, support of innovators is nothing new for Akron, known as the Rubber City for many decades. The reason we had 100 years of prosperity as a manufacturer of tire and rubber products—and subsequently developed a polymer industry—was the investment made in 1870 by 23 Akron businessmen. Those visionaries anted up \$13,600 to gamble on Benjamin Franklin Goodrich (then an unsuccessful physician in New York) who was trying to launch a brand new industry in Akron. Who could have predicted that Dr. Goodrich's move to Akron would spawn an industry that would come to employ 40,000 people within a century?

I don't know where the next Dr. Goodrich or Bill Gates will come from, but I do know that if we as a City join with local businesses to continue our tradition of investing in innovators, we'll increase our chances of having the next BFGoodrich or Microsoft develop here. If we sit back and do nothing, we will not get our share.

It's a shrinking world indeed, and we need to continue to fight for our share. 



Joe Kanfer, Chairman & CEO of Akron's GOJO Industries (seated, center) executes agreement with Targetech incubator and the City of Akron. Others involved were Azriel Kadim, CEO of Targetech (left), Howard Gudell, President of the Ohio-Israel Chamber of Commerce, and Mayor Plusquellic (right). Looking on are others in the delegation, (L-R) David Silk of the OICC, Robert Bowman, Akron's Deputy Mayor for Economic Development, Marc Merklin of Brouse-McDowell, Targetech Marketing Director Brenda Zeitlin, and Zev Gurion of GlobeChem Marketing.

Letters to the Editor

The 2006 Calendar is just splendid. Thanks once again for an excellent and very helpful production! We count on it to help us keep up with what's going on in the City—and the pictures just confirm our belief that Akron's a pretty good place to live.

—Aine Donovan

Carol and I believe that Bruce Ford's photography for the 2006 calendar features some of his best work. It's truly gratifying to see Bruce's maturation as an artist. Congratulations to all involved in publishing a first-rate product. Your calendar does our City proud.

—Bob Belfance

The picture of my wife and me getting married at First Night appeared in *Akron City Magazine*. It was a very good picture, since everyone we knew who had a camera was sitting down watching us. I was wondering if there is a way I could get copies of the pictures?

—Bud Heffley

Editor's Note: Bruce Ford's photos are available for purchase. Photographs may be requested by writing editor@ci.akron.oh.us.

NOTICE TO READERS:

This year, free packets of Keep Akron Beautiful seeds are not included in the May-August magazine. While supplies last, free seed packets may be picked up at any of Akron's 12 neighborhood Community Centers.

The Ohio-Israel Chamber of Commerce, in collaboration with GlobeChem Marketing and the Akron Jewish Community Board, planned the Akron Trade Mission to Israel that included participation by the following local organizations: Akron General Health System, Advanced Elastomer Systems, ASW Services, Bridgestone Americas, Brouse-McDowell, Children's Hospital, ExxonMobil, Flexsys, GOJO Industries, INCLUDIS Manufacturing Software, LMA Commerce Ltd., Lancer Dispersions, OMNOVA Solutions, Summa Health System, Thomarios Inc., Newell-Rubbermaid, The University of Akron, the Ohio Department of Development and Polymer Ohio Inc.

SGI Global Business Advisors LLC, international business consultants to the City and Summit County, coordinated the program in Akron and Israel.



Donald L. Plusquellic

Akron City

Akron City is produced three times a year by the City of Akron Communications Department. The magazine and recycling calendar is distributed by U.S. Mail to all residents of Akron by Keep Akron Beautiful, a not-for-profit corporation in the state of Ohio.

Additional copies of the magazine and recycling calendar are available through the Department of Communications, Mayor's Office, 166 South High Street, Akron, OH 44308.

Our Cover Photo...

...is **Bruce Ford's** photo of a couple enjoying the Akron Aeros at Canal Park stadium. Home games of the Double-A champs of the Eastern League are April 13 – August 27. (Playoffs would be later.)

Tell us what you think by replying to editor@ci.akron.oh.us

Or share your thoughts with the mayor at mayor@ci.akron.oh.us

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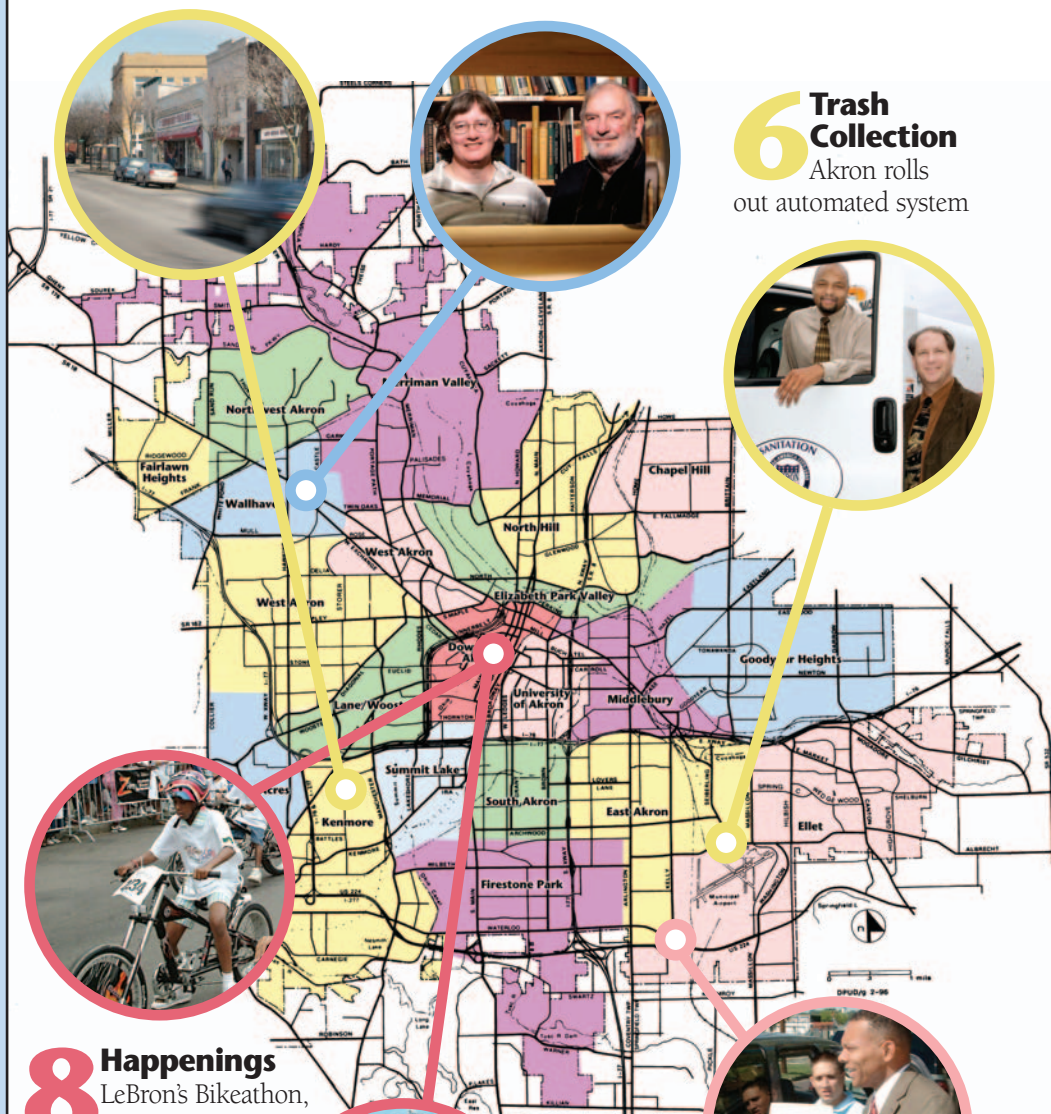


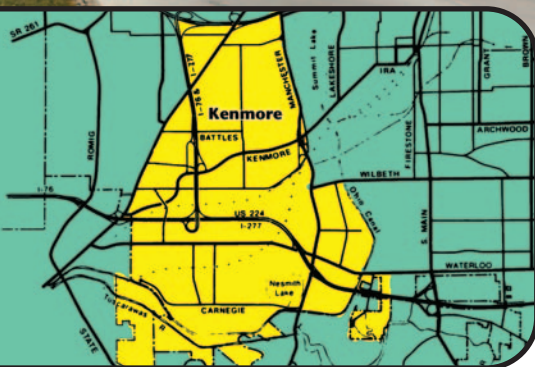
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students partner in
volunteer effort





Kenmore Boulevard will undergo a major renovation later this year.

Kenmore

Towpath, Boulevard Projects Drive Kenmore's Resurgence

By Robert Sberna

Established as a new residential area in the early 1900s, the development of the Kenmore neighborhood followed the old trolley line between Akron and Barberton. More than a century later, Kenmore's proximity to major transportation routes is still one of its many attributes.

"We have absolutely wonderful access off the Expressway," says Mike Freeman, Ward 9 Councilperson and a lifelong Kenmore resident. "Interstates 277 and 76 literally cross Kenmore Boulevard."

While Kenmore's highway access is attractive to the area's commuters and business owners, Freeman says that the planned extension of the Towpath Trail will serve recreation enthusiasts. Work will begin next year on a section of the hike-and-bike trail that crosses Kenmore Boulevard. "It will be a huge amenity for Ward 9 to be so close to the Towpath," Freeman notes. "No matter where you live in the ward, you won't be more than two miles from the trail."

He adds that the southwest Akron neighborhood is also home to Mud Run Golf Course, a nine-hole facility that was opened in 2003. And later this year, Kenmore Boulevard, the commercial center of the neighborhood, will undergo a \$1 million

improvement program that includes resurfacing, new sidewalks and trees, decorative lighting and a renovated median.

"There's a lot of undiscovered potential in Kenmore," Freeman says. As an example, he says the area boasts affordable housing. "If people were to compare our home prices to some of the other communities in the City, they'd find that our prices are 10 to 15 percent less than comparable homes."

In its early years, Kenmore was incorporated as a self-sufficient city. Annexed to the City of Akron in 1929, Kenmore has retained a sense of independence. "There's a tight-knit community atmosphere here," says Freeman. "We still have a lot of autonomous groups such as the Kenmore Board of Trade, a ministerial association, the Kenmore Historical Society and our own Kiwanis chapter."

He notes that a long-time anchor of the business district has been the Ancient Order of Hibernians Club (AOH), whose members are working with the City to find new headquarters space along the Boulevard. At the




Councilman Mike Freeman

same time, the City is finalizing plans for the long-awaited construction of the Kenmore branch of the Akron Public Library. Site development plans for both projects are expected to be announced this summer.

The social hub of the neighborhood is the Kenmore Community Center, which hosts a wide range of activities, including scout meetings, after-school programs, and senior

programs such as card parties and Meals on Wheels. "The Community Center has been a springboard for new organizations to get started and also serves as a place for fledgling groups to meet at little or no cost," says Freeman of the City-funded facility.

About three years ago, Freeman and other neighborhood leaders formed the Kenmore Development Partnership, which is focused on bringing new businesses to Kenmore Boulevard. "The area is ideal for niche businesses, like a tackle shop or a wig shop," he says. "We've got a lot to offer, including good demographics and attractive rental prices." 

Wallhaven

For Booklovers and Browsers, The Bookseller is a Rare Find

By Robert Sberna



Andrea and Frank Klein

Just as you can't judge a book by its cover, the same applies to The Bookseller. Tucked behind the Wallhaven Plaza on West Market Street, The Bookseller's nondescript storefront belies the treasures of rare and used books inside.

Featuring a wide selection of hardcovers and paperbacks in all disciplines, the shop specializes in new and old works about Akron and Ohio. Frank Klein, who operates The Bookseller with his daughter, Andrea Klein, says the shop has especially strong holdings in historical books about the rubber industry and the Ohio & Erie Canal, as well as aviation and military subjects. Along with its 25,000 or so books, The Bookseller maintains a collection of historical maps, photos and ephemera.


The business was founded in 1948 by Frank Klein's father, Clarence, in the basement of his Cuyahoga Falls home. Throughout its history, The Bookseller has moved to several Akron locations, relocating to its present site at 39 Westgate Circle in 2001.

"We've developed a loyal following over the years," says Frank, 80. "We have

generations of customers coming here. Sometimes three or four generations of the same family will be in the shop at the same time."

Like other independent bookstores, however, The Bookseller is facing increasing competition from large chain stores and Internet-based commerce. "Now that people can buy and sell old books on the Internet, the number of people who come into the shop has dropped," Frank says. "Open bookstores such as ours are closing up."

Nevertheless, Andrea Klein says the Internet has provided an additional distribution channel for The Bookseller. "In the past, we used to sell only a couple of books a year to overseas customers," she explains. "But now, we sell books overseas every week through the Internet."

Saying that her father is grudgingly adapting to the Internet, Andrea notes, "I think there will always be a place for used bookstores. People still like to browse a store and pick up a book and experience the feel of it in their hands. You can't get that feeling from the Internet." 

Neighborhoods

Firestone Park

Customers Get a Trim and a Meal at DeCheco's

by Mark Williamson

Not once has Jack DeCheco gotten pepperoni on a customer's head. Nor has he ever topped a pizza with sideburns.

That's not as far-fetched as you might think when you consider that DeCheco's Barber Shop is next door to DeCheco's



Pizzeria at 207 South Main Street.

Jack DeCheco clips while Bob Keith (Akron ward 8 councilman) chews.

DeCheco started cutting hair about 100,000 heads ago. He opened his own shop on Main Street in 1978 and added the pizza shop 15 years later.

"My wife, Shirley, was a hairdresser," he explains. "One day she fell, broke her ankle, and had to be off work for awhile. We missed her income and decided to start making our own 'dough,'" he jokes, flashing his trademark ornery smile.


DeCheco's Pizzeria is best known for its white pizza—the recipes come from Shirley, notes Jack, adding that all dishes are made from scratch.

DeCheco's Barber Shop is best known for Jack's wit—a trim comes with a side of stand-up comedy from a guy who has loved using the clippers for 40 years.

Occasionally, DeCheco has to leave the chair and scissors behind and hurry next door to the pizza shop. "Someone will knock on the wall, and I'll know they need help," he says.

Clipping and kneading, sweeping and slicing, joking and topping—that's the life of a barber/baker.

Jack is helped at the pizzeria by his 17-year-old son, Nathan, and manager Stephen Magyarics—a small crew that has seen its revenues increase 10-12 percent every year.

Noting that his barber shop/pizzeria is only five houses away from his childhood home, DeCheco quips, "A dentist who didn't believe in Novocain practiced in this location back then. At least now, there's no more screaming." 

Trash Collection

Trash pickup is entering a new era in Akron. This summer, City residents will find that the age-old chore of taking out the trash has gotten easier, cleaner and more efficient. *by Bob Sberna*

In what Public Works Manager Paul Barnett calls “the biggest service-level change in Akron in the past 20 years,” the City is converting to an automated trash pickup system.

Beginning July 17, residents will roll a specially designed trash cart to their curb, where a truck with a mechanical arm will grab and lift the cart, dump its contents into the truck, and then set the container back down.

The wheeled trash carts will be distributed free to each household throughout the months of July and August. At the same time, those residents who “make a pledge” to recycle will also get a blue recycling container—and a reduction in their monthly trash collection rate.

The \$8.5 million cost of implementing the new program will be financed by the City, with

\$5.5 million earmarked to purchase 116,000 trash carts and the remainder going to buy 18 new collection trucks equipped with lifting mechanisms.

The new trucks are designed to be driven and operated by a single person. The process of emptying the trash carts takes about 10 seconds and can be performed without the driver leaving the vehicle.

Switching from the current system of three-person trash pickup teams to a one-person automated truck will result in a significant reduction in work-related injuries, says Barnett. “Lifting trash is very hard, physical work. The sanitation workers each lift about 14,000 pounds a day. In heavy seasons, such as fall, spring and right after Christmas, that amount doubles to



Rob Harris and Paul Barnett

28,000 pounds. Keep in mind that they are lifting the trash at least 42 inches to get it in the truck.”

Noting that back, knee and neck injuries are commonplace among sanitation workers, Barnett says, “We average about 60 injury reports a year in the Sanitation Department. It hurts me to see all those reports come across my desk.”

Statistics show that the trash collectors experience a disproportionately high number of injuries and workers’ compensation claims in comparison to other City employees. According to Diane Miller-Dawson, Finance Director for the City of Akron, the 78-member Sanitation Department represents about 3 percent of the City’s workforce but accounts for 25 percent of lost-time workers’ compensation claims.

“The cost of those



Goes High-Tech



The robotic arm is controlled by a joystick in the truck cab.



that they are easy to roll. And the carts have attached lids, so we don't have to worry about dogs

and raccoons ripping into trash bags or loose trash blowing away.”

Under the new system, trash must be placed in bags and then put in the cart with the lid closed. No trash should be placed outside or on top of the cart. Households with a large output of trash may purchase an extra cart for a one-time fee of \$50 (however, the monthly rate will not increase).

Accompanying the rollout of the automated system is a new rate plan that rewards recyclers. The monthly residential rate for 2006 is \$17.50. Effective September, those who do not recycle will pay \$19 per month. Residents who recycle will receive a \$2.00 discount, and pay \$17 per month. Rates for low-income residents and seniors will drop to \$8.80 a month for recyclers and increase to \$10.80 for nonrecyclers. To indicate your intention to recycle, send in the postcard inserted in this magazine, or call the City's 3-1-1 Center, or visit www.ci.akron.oh.us/311.

The procedure for collecting recyclables will be different than for trash. Prior to emptying the blue recycling carts into collection trucks, workers will look into the carts to ensure that the contents are not contaminated with nonrecyclable materials.

Each household can also request up to two large-volume pickups per year. To schedule large-volume pickups, call the 3-1-1 Center. Large-volume pickups will be made on the same day as the resident's regular trash pickup. Tree branches, brush, carpeting and other bulk items should be cut and bundled in four-foot lengths.


The Advantages of “Going Robotic”

Deliveries of the new trash carts will take place from July 10 through August 25. Once residents receive their carts, they are

asked to start using them on their next regular pickup date.

Collection days for trash and recyclables will stay the same; however service times may change. About 27 percent of Akron is served by a private contractor, Inland Waste. Those customers will receive the same service as the remainder of the City.

Prior to deciding to automate Akron's trash pickup, Barnett and his management team visited similar operations in many cities, including Columbus, Wadsworth, Warren and Cuyahoga Falls. “This system is the world standard,” Barnett notes. “They’ve had automated pickup in Europe for 30 years and in Columbus for 17 years. This is the way to go.”

For more information about the City's new trash pickup system, call the 3-1-1 Center or visit www.ci.akron.oh.us/311. 

Tips for Using the Automated Collection System

Correct placement of cart is key element of the automated pickup process.

- Please place the cart no more than three feet from the curb and away from other objects such as mailboxes, trees, fire hydrants, parked cars, etc.
- The handle of your cart should point toward your house. (Arrows on the lid should point towards the street.)
- Compact your trash as much as possible. Flatten cardboard boxes to save space.
- Lids should be kept shut to keep animals and rainwater out of trash.
- Do not overload cart. Do not put hazardous material or protruding objects in cart.
- Please do not put trash on ground or on top of cart. All trash should be bagged and placed in the cart. If necessary, please request an additional cart from the City.
- Once trash has been emptied, please roll the cart away from the curb and store in a safe location.



This is



The St. Patrick's Day Parade attracted hundreds of marchers and onlookers to Downtown Akron, and everyone got into the "wearin' of the green." This is an annual event sponsored by the Hibernians Club of Akron.



The Akron Aeros, champions of the AA Eastern League in 2005, open their 10th year at Canal Park this spring, and continue the tradition of featuring Akron's youngest citizens in the role of batboys and batgirls.



The 1st National Hamburger Festival is expected to attract thousands of visitors to South Main Street, August 12-13. Four cities vying for the title of "Inventor of the Hamburger" will present their cases to the first-ever "Burger Commission," which will hold court at Canal Park. Mayor Plusquellic digs into a Menches burger, Akron's entry in the contest. Four descendants of the Menches Brothers—the Akron duo who claim bragging rights to having invented the hamburger—

admire Hizzoner's style: (L-R) Linda Aleman, Judy Menches-Kusmits, Tina Birch and Tom Menches. Go to www.hamburgerfestival.com for information.

AKRON

Photos by Bruce Ford



Veterans Day was commemorated with a City-sponsored concert at the Akron Civic Theatre, featuring the Summit Choral Society under the direction of Frank Jacobs (pictured) and the Arlington Church of God Chancel Choir under the direction of Leslie Parker Barnes. Major Eric Mansfield, Ohio Army National Guard and news anchor for WKYC TV-23, was the master of ceremonies. Colors were presented by Akron-based Weapons Company 3/25, who returned from Iraq in October.



Akron's Annual Holiday

Parade launched this year's

Holidayfest that attracted

68,000 visitors from 40 states

and seven foreign countries.

Becca Salchak (top) was part

of the Ingenue Theater

Ensemble's parade unit.



The LeBron James "King for Kids Bikeathon" will be back for its second year on Saturday, June 24, 2006. The Bikeathon is expected to attract more than 3,000 riders, who will cycle through an eight-mile course that begins and ends in Downtown Akron. This year, 300 bicycles will be given by the NBA star to youngsters selected for good character. For information, go to www.lebronfoundation.org.



The Lantern Parade

at the Christkindl Market at Lock 3 (top) was led by an authentic 19-piece brass band from Oelsnitz, Germany, near Akron's sister city of Chemnitz in the Erzgebirge Mountains. Youngsters were invited to make their own paper lanterns and join in the fun (left). Go to www.holidayfest.org for information.

SEVEN ANSWERED THE CALL

By Russ Musarra

Seven City of Akron employees answered the call to serve in Iraq or Afghanistan following the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. Six have returned home and are back on the job. Police Sergeant **JAMES CURRIE**, an Air Force reservist deployed last December, is still serving in Iraq.

Army Major **DUANE LACLAIR**, an air pollution engineer, was awarded the Bronze Star during service in Iraq in 2004. A City employee for 16 years, he began 20 years of Army Reserve service after active duty in the Air Force. As a member of the 635th Quartermaster Petroleum Group, LaClair oversaw delivery of fuel to coalition forces. LaClair was "a major player in managing, planning and executing the movement and distribution of over 500 million gallons of petroleum products in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom," Major Gen. Paul E. Mock wrote in his Bronze Star recommendation.

CHARLES MILLER, a 15-year City employee assigned to sewer maintenance, served in both Gulf Wars. A staff sergeant with the Army's 79th Quartermaster Co., Miller was wounded during his 2003 tour, in which he was assigned to install water lines in Iraq. That mission changed when the company was deployed to Baghdad to provide protection to the coalition forces. Noting that he saw "a lot of starving people in the south of Iraq," Miller says, "People were willing to die for our trash." A reservist for 24 years, he was sent home after incurring a shoulder injury during an encounter with an Iraqi who was scavenging the company's garbage. "It's an honor to serve this country," says Miller.

GERALD BODNAR, an Ohio National Guard major with 22 years' service, served in Kuwait and Iraq in 2004 with the Army's 107th Calvary, 27th Battalion. Bodnar oversaw operations and defense of a military base in northern Iraq. A Police Officer for 11 years, Bodnar is a member of the Guard's 237th Support Battalion. That unit is scheduled for deployment in August, so Bodnar may be called to serve again.




(Back row, L to R) Charles Miller, Duane LaClair
(Front row, L to R) Garland Paynter, Charles Walker

Ohio National Guard Sgt. 1st Class **GARLAND PAYNTER**, a City sanitation worker for five years, began 14 months in Iraq with the 612th Army Engineers in 2004. He also saw active duty during the first Gulf War. Paynter joined the Guard eight years ago after serving eight years in the Army.

Akron Firefighter/Medic **DARRELL HOPSON** retired from the National Guard last November after serving a year in Iraq with the 1484th Transportation Co. Hopson, whose final rank was staff sergeant, chalked up 22 years' military service, which included 10 years' active Army duty. Hopson, a firefighter since 1996 and a paramedic from 1998 to 2003, is assigned to Ladder Co. 8 at Archwood and Kelly Avenues.

Firefighter/Medic **CHARLES WALKER** earned the Afghanistan Campaign Medal, the Iraq Campaign Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal and the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal for service as a flight engineer with the Air Force's 773rd Air Lift Squadron. During five deployments from 2003 to 2005, he

logged nearly 600 combat hours and nearly 50 combat support hours in which troops and supplies were flown to bases in the Middle East and other regions of the world. One of his missions involved transporting U.S. Senators Hillary Clinton and John McCain from Baghdad to Kuwait. Walker, a City employee since 1989, has been a firefighter since 1992 and a paramedic since 1994. He serves at the Tower/Medic No. 6 at Wooster and Hawkins Avenues. He began his National Guard service in 1986 and now is an Air Force Reserve master sergeant with 15 years' service.

Special mention also goes to Akron Police Officers James Hentosz, who served in Saudi Arabia in 2002-2003; Albito Lopez, who was stationed in Qatar for three months; and Lt. Chip Westfall, who spent eight months in Bahrain and Turkey after the Sept. 11 events. 



Darrell Hopson



Officer Gerald Bodnar



Sergeant James Currie

DOWNTOWN

is **THE** place to be this
Summer for **Festivals,**
Food, Fun and More!

LOCK 3 LIVE!
FIRSTENERGY STAGE



SATURDAY
June 10

**Akron District
Marbles
Championship**

SATURDAY
June 24

**The LeBron
James "King for
Kids" Bikeathon**



**June 30-
July 4**

**The Akron
Family BBQ**

SATURDAY
July 1

**The Akron
Family BBQ
Old School Soul**

SUNDAY
July 2

**The Akron
Family BBQ
This Is My
Country**

MONDAY
July 3

**The Akron Family
BBQ, Dave
Matthews Tribute
Band - FREE**

TUESDAY
July 4

**The Akron Family
BBQ, Teen Idols,
and Fireworks on
the Innerbelt!**

SATURDAY
July 8

Day of Reggae

SAT. & SUN.
July 15-16

**Akron
Auto
Showcase -
FREE**



SATURDAY
July 22

**The British
Are Coming**

SATURDAY
July 29

**4th
Annual
Gospelfest**



SATURDAY
August 5

Heart & Soul

SATURDAY
**August
12**

**Cheeseburger in
Paradise - FREE**



**Saturday & Sunday,
August 12 & 13**

**National Hamburger Festival
at Canal Park Stadium**

Four cities vie for the title, "Home of the Hamburger," as the first ever
Burger Commission holds hearings to determine who invented
America's favorite sandwich!
See www.hamburgerfestival.com.

SATURDAY
**August
19**

'70s Flashback

SATURDAY
**August
26**

Disco Daze

SATURDAY
**September
2**

**Smooth Jazz
Holiday**

Admission to most Lock 3
events is \$10, but with a free
Do Downtown card, just
\$5/person. Kids always free.
Admission for July 1,2,4 is \$5.
Gospelfest admission is \$5. Go to
www.downtownakron.com.

Every Friday, June 30 to
September 1 — "Rock the Lock"
at Lock 3 Park with Rubber City
Radio. **Free Admission.**

History

Building Boom

75th anniversary for several city landmarks

By Dave Lieberth



Among American cities, Akron was as hard-hit as any other community by the Great Depression of 1929.

In the year following the stock market crash, 14,000 Akron men and women lost their jobs. By 1930, savings withdrawals at local banks surpassed deposits by

\$14 million. In October 1931, the first of Akron's banks announced that it couldn't open its doors.

Within another year, 11,000 more workers would lose their jobs; and, as tax collections declined, the City of Akron itself was crushed by the debt incurred to build waterlines and sewers to accommodate the hyperactive

growth of the 1920s.

But between 1929 and 1933—certainly some of Akron's darkest days ever—the City saw construction of some of the great art nouveau buildings that still describe our skyline.

The new O'Neil's Department Store had opened in 1928. Just a few weeks prior to "Black Friday" in October 1929, Polsky's broke ground across Main Street for a store that would open in 1930.

Ohio Bell Telephone Company moved into a massive new structure in 1929 at Bowery and Quaker Streets; and a new Post Office, now

the Charles Mayer studios, was completed on East Market Street that same year.

In 1930, the presses started up in the new home of the *Akron Times-Press*, which later became home to the *Beacon Journal* on East Exchange Street.

Akron had been without a grand hotel for decades, a situation to be remedied when ground was broken for the Mayflower Hotel in 1929 at South Main and State Streets. The 16-story structure contained 450 guest rooms and was completed in the spring of 1931.


In January 1931, the YWCA opened the building on South High Street at Bowery that is now used by the City of Akron as headquarters for the Fire Department and Personnel Office. That building also contains an athletic club that still sees swimmers every day in its art deco pool.

In March of that same year, the YMCA completed its 16-story landmark structure that was converted in the 1980s to apartments for downtown dwellers.

The Central-Depositors Bank & Trust Co., now FirstMerit Bank, opened the 28-story tower on July 23, 1931 that has defined Akron's skyline for 75 years. More than 40,000 people went through the "skyscraper" on opening day.

Add to this list the construction that grew out of the federal WPA program—including a new municipal airport and terminal building (1931), the Rubber Bowl and a Soap Box Derby track—and it's evident that the Depression era constituted a building "boom" for the Rubber City.

Although most of the construction occurred after the stock market crash, each project had been planned and financed before October 1929.

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the opening of the two "Y" buildings, FirstMerit Tower, the Mayflower and Fulton Airport's Terminal building. To commemorate the history of Downtown Akron's most significant structures, special events will be held during the Fourth of July weekend. 



Akron Airport Terminal



U.S. Post Office



The Mayflower Hotel

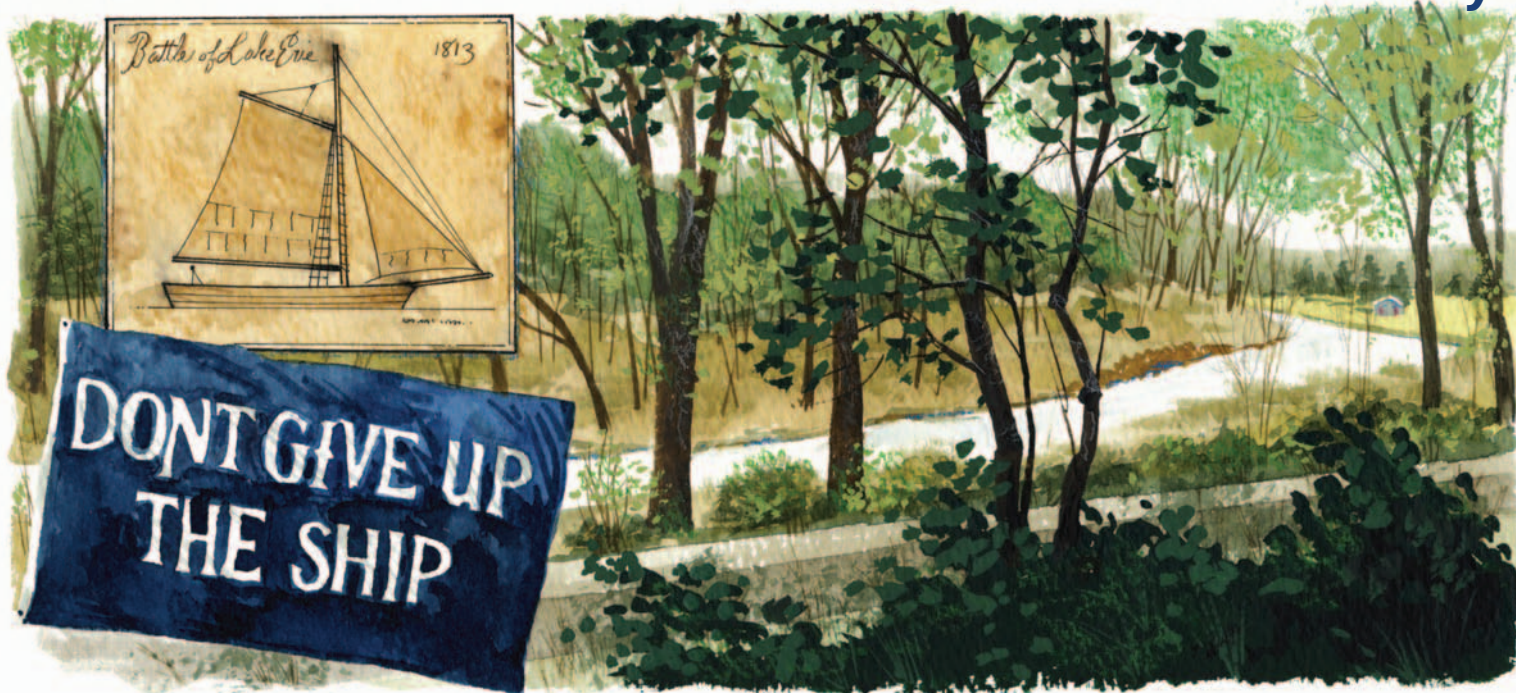


The Central YMCA building



The Central YWCA building

This summer's Fourth of July weekend will be filled with a family-friendly history adventure. Get an **Akron History Passport** and join the "history trails" project to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the FirstMerit Tower, the YMCA and YWCA, and other significant events in our City's past. Start at the Akron History Exhibit at Lock 3, visit the City's website at www.ci.akron.oh.us, or call (330) 375-2500.



Trailing a Legend or Two

By Russ Musarra/Illustration by Chuck Ayers

The boatyard was deserted when we arrived. At least, we believed we were at the place where—according to legend—boats were built for use in the War of 1812.

You can see the area from the backyards of some homes in the Riverwoods development off Merriman Road, just south of the Big Bend Area of Sand Run Metro Park. But artist Chuck Ayers and I took a closer look from the Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail.

We first heard about the boatyard legend from Joseph D. Jesensky, an Akron resident who has been walking the trails in the Cuyahoga River valley for most of his 99 years. The boatyard's location, he wrote in his book, *Joe's Place: Conversations on the Cuyahoga Valley*, was in the Big Bend Area across the railroad tracks from the skating pond, between the trunk sewer that runs along the canal bed and the river.

One version of the boatyard tale that circulated for years was that three boats were built at this site for use by Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry in his defeat of the British in the Battle of Lake Erie on Sept. 10, 1813.

A more likely version is that boats were


built to take General William Henry Harrison's troops to Canada for the Battle of the Thames, in which the British and their Indian allies were defeated on Oct. 5, 1813.

The latter version was shared by retired Akron teacher James Hudkins in an *Akron Beacon Journal* article on Sept. 5, 2001. Hudkins based his account on records showing that the U.S. Secretary of War ordered boat construction in the Ohio wilderness in March 1813, as well as reports that 26 boats were built in Akron and Fairport Harbor.

Following the directions in the *Beacon Journal* article, we walked south toward the Valley View Golf Course, where, Hudkins contends, boats were built along the riverbank in two pits—each 150 feet long and 60 feet wide. We saw no sign of the pits. But we did see three deer grazing on a fairway, and we were serenaded by robins and nuthatches, which sang to a tempo hampered out by woodpeckers.

The deer spotted us too. Protected by distance and the trunk sewer that separated us, they moved in our direction. One tried several times to climb up the trunk line to

get to our side, then gave up and joined its companions as they headed north along the fairway.

So that's the scene Ayers decided to use for his illustration—the boatyard as it appears today, with the symbolic additions of a boat sketch and Perry's battle flag, which was emblazoned with the motto "Don't Give Up The Ship," the dying words of his friend, Captain James Lawrence, who was killed on June 1, 1813, and for whom Perry's ship was named. 

Artist Chuck Ayers and writer Russ Musarra began their series of essays, based on walks around the community, in March 1987 in the Akron Beacon Journal's Sunday magazine. Ayers, a former Beacon Journal artist and editorial cartoonist, created the comic strip "Crankshaft" with Tom Batiuk. Musarra has combined his interests in history and writing into a career spanning 48 years, including reporting duties at both the Beacon Journal and the now-defunct Cleveland Press.

Community

Volunteers Refurbish, Recycle Outdated City Computers

By Russ Musarra

The staff of a nonprofit agency and students at two schools have computers today, thanks to the recycling efforts of volunteers assembled by Pat Ashbrook, Purchasing Agent for the City of Akron.

It all started when Ashbrook asked Police Detective Stan Smith for help dealing with the City's growing number of broken or outdated computers. "The Mayor and City Council said we could donate the computers to nonprofit organizations," explained Ashbrook, adding that she approached Smith because of his extensive work in the data processing field.

But the duo soon discovered they were facing a complex challenge. While many of the computers were salvageable, most needed



(L to R) Lawrence Barto, Tallmadge Christian Academy, and Stan Smith holding computer.

extensive repairs. So Ashbrook and Smith decided to employ the skills of three students at the Alternative Academy: Matt Goebel ("our guru," noted Ashbrook), Craig Hutchinson and Joseph Vargas.

The students, working under Smith's tutelage, updated and repaired the usable computers with parts from those deemed otherwise worthless. The refurbished equipment was given to Urban Ounce of Prevention Services and Tallmadge Christian and Royal Christian Academies.

Initially, Smith and the students worked in space at City Hall, but now the work has been shifted to the Alternative Academy computer lab. The group meets for an hour every Wednesday in the school's basement.

Smith and Ashbrook even found use for the leftover equipment at the Trumbull Correctional Institution. "They take the computers we can't use," said Smith, who, with other volunteers has traveled to the prison every three or four months with equipment that otherwise would have been discarded.


Smith, an Akron Police Officer since 1980, has been a member of the computer forensics unit since 1998 and has utilized his computer skills on the job since 1985. He stays current with new technology by



(L to R) Craig Hutchinson, Matt Goebel, Joe Vargas.

attending courses at the FBI Academy, the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center and various seminars.

The Cleveland native began college studies at Cleveland State University but transferred to the University of Akron. "I've been loving it ever since," said Smith, who earned his bachelor's and master's degrees in planning and urban studies at UA and is now working toward his doctorate in technical education. Smith also teaches criminal justice part-time at Summit College. He's married and is the father of two.

The recycling program Ashbrook and Smith started may soon grow to 30 student volunteers, Ashbrook said. Anyone interested in participating may reach Ashbrook at 330-375-2168. 



U.S. Army Reserve Specialist Andrew Williams, from Akron, serving in Iraq this spring with the 454 Transportation Company, stopped by Mayor Plusquellic's office during his home leave in February. Specialist Williams presented the Mayor with an American Flag that was flying over his unit's base at Camp Endurance, Iraq. The 26-year-old graduate of Central-Hower and Ellet High Schools has been in Iraq since February of 2005.



by Russ Musarra

NEW ON MAIN STREET

There are two more good reasons to visit what I like to call the Main Street Island—that section isolated from the rest of North Main by Furnace Street and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard—and you can thank **KELLY STEELE** for both reasons.


Steele has operated the Bistro @ Northside at the rear of **MIKE OWEN's** Northside bar since January. She also is the proprietor of Erehwon North, an interactive art gallery



upstairs, where you can see artists at work and purchase their creations from noon to 9 p.m., Monday through Saturday. The address of all three places is 111 North Main Street.

Erehwon ("nowhere" spelled backwards) had its grand opening in March. The Bistro opens for lunch at 11 a.m. and serves dinner until 9 p.m., Monday through Thursday; and until


11 p.m., Friday and Saturday. Two of Steele's five-member staff are graduates of the Pittsburgh Culinary School.

Erehwon fits nicely into Owen's vision for the area, which includes the Zeber-Martell Studio at 43 Furnace Street and soon, he says, will feature the Akron Glass Works, where the public will be invited to watch glassblowers at work. "We're really going to have a nice neighborhood here at the south end of the national park," notes Owen, who owns five buildings in the commercial enclave. He leases the Bistro space and the gallery loft to Steele. 

LEARNING TO RELAX

Ask **LUNZY ARMSTRONG** what he's been up to since he retired as Akron's Deputy Service Director at the end of February, and you'll hear a tale of fun and games, beginning with six days of golf with friends in Florida. "I have no immediate plans; I want to see what retirement will be like," says Armstrong, who rises early and exercises three mornings each week, and spends the rest of his time doing "a lot of reading and relaxing."

Armstrong, 66, was a month shy of 17 years of overseeing operations at the Bureau of Public Works' motor equipment division, facilities maintenance, off-street parking and traffic engineering when he retired. Before joining the City, he taught business management courses at a local vocational school and for 23 years directed the maintenance of the corporate grounds and the physical facilities for Firestone. He was instrumental in development of the Lane Field project and founded the South Rangers football program at Lane Field for children eight to 15. He grew up in South Akron and is a graduate of South High and The University of Akron.

"Lunzy can't really be replaced... but moving into that job is another loyal servant of the people of Akron, **JOHN VALLE**, who has 22 years of public service at City Council," Mayor **DON PLUSQUELLIC** said in his State of the City address. The Mayor called Armstrong "a trusted and dedicated member of my cabinet" and thanked him "for truly embodying the spirit of public service with his commitment to always doing the best job for the people." 



EMPLOYEES OF THE MONTH



A tip of the Town Crier's hat to Akron Police Officer **ERIC PAULL** and Akron Water Pollution Control Lab Analyst **DON CALVERT**, who earned employee-of-the-month honors for

February and March, respectively. (No award was given for January, and my deadline arrived before an announcement was made for April.)


Paull, a grant writer in the Planning and Research Unit since March 2002, became a police officer on August 28, 1995. He

works closely with the Crime Analysts, Accountant and Law Enforcement Planners, and has received local and state recognition for his work in Homeland Security, specifically by designing and implementing the Buffer Zone Protection Plan. He also developed a four-day, 10-hour-a-day work schedule currently being negotiated by the City of Akron and the Police Union. He is enrolled in the only nationally recognized Homeland Security master's degree program, which is offered through the U.S. Naval Academy, and was one of only two Ohioans accepted into the program. He and his wife, **FRANCINE**, have two daughters, **CONNIE** and **MEREDITH**.

Calvert began his career with the City of Akron as a Wastewater Quality Aide in 1973. As a Lab Analyst, he monitors Water Pollution Control's daily operations, pre-



pares numerous internal reports, makes sure the lab has needed supplies, maintains the integrity of the lab database and conducts tours of the lab as part of his commitment to public outreach and

education. He volunteers with the Akron Reads project and assisted the Ellet High School biology department in its study of the Cuyahoga River. A past chair of the Northeast Ohio Lab Analyst Committee, he was recently admitted to the highly prestigious Crystal Crucible Society and received the Northeast Ohio Water Environment Associated Lab Analyst award for 2002. 

KEEP AKRON BEAUTIFUL

Help KEEP AKRON BEAUTIFUL celebrate its 25th anniversary in 2006!

Enter the DREAMSCAPE Raffle and win a \$10,000 makeover of your front or back yard by the professional landscape designers at R.G. Thomas Landscape & Design. Tickets are \$25 each. Go to www.keepakron-beautiful.org and download a mail-in order form, or write KAB at 850 E. Market St., Akron, OH 44305.

The winning ticket will be drawn June 8 at the Junior League Show House at the Perkins Mansion.

"Clean Up Akron Week" is April 29 - May 6.

NOTICE TO READERS:

This year, free packets of Keep Akron Beautiful seeds are not included in the May-August magazine. While supplies last, free seed packets may be picked up at any of Akron's 12 neighborhood Community Centers.



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